Department of Human Services
Addictions & Mental Health Division
Children's System Change Initiative
Focus Groups Data Summary
March 18, 2009

In response to an issue brief developed by the Children's System Advisory Committee (CSAC), Addictions and Mental Health Division (AMH) facilitated 10 focus groups between December 2008 and February 2009 to gather feedback about systemic and clinical challenges that have developed since the implementation of the Children's System Change Initiative (CSCI). This assessment was designed to focus on the children's mental health system and how it has been impacted by the CSCI as a first step in a continuous process of system improvement that includes all stakeholders at the state, regional, and local levels. The data that results from these focus groups will be distributed to community participants to inform changes and support problem solving at the local level.

The focus groups were organized in collaboration with the nine Mental Health Organizations (MHOs) and were held in Eugene, Grants Pass, Hillsboro, Oregon City, Salem, Portland, Corvallis, Redmond, Newport, and Boardman. A total of 196 participants attended the groups that included representation by mental health (62%), family members (15%), child welfare (12%), education (6%), juvenile justice (1%), tribes (1%), and other stakeholders (3%). Group participants identified and voted on the most important concerns related to nine topic areas and discussed possible solutions and system strengths as time allowed.

Subsequently, prioritized concerns from all groups were combined by topic and organized into common themes. Following is a ranking of the nine topic themes that received the most cumulative votes within their respective topics:

1. **Theme:** Lack of understanding about/challenges reconciling partner agencies' mandates/ability to share responsibility (73)
   Topic: Ability for Systems/Agencies to Collaborate
2. **Theme:** Administrative burden/redundant documentation requirements/too much paperwork (72)
   Topic: Administrative Rules & Contract Issues

3. **Theme:** Frequency/availability/quality/array of services does not meet need/lack of non-traditional services & supports (61)
   Topic: Service Array Availability
4. **Theme:** Engaging families/supporting their involvement on the front end (52)
    Topic: Level of Family & Youth Involvement
5. **Theme:** Poor continuity of care with providers in the mental health system/documentation/understanding and use of levels (43)
   Topic: Transitions between Levels of Care
6. **Theme:** Need more clinical & systems training/supervision in community-based services (42)
   Topic: Workforce Issues
7. **Theme:** Disagreements about appropriate level of care (41)
   Topic: Access & Referral
8. **Theme:** Not enough funding for community-based services/difficulty funding resources like treatment foster care (33)
   Topic: Provider Stress & Financial Limitations
9. **Theme:** Lack meaningful outcome data/administrative cost of reporting it (27)
   Topic: Other Issues

A complete list of ranked themes by topic can be found in the related document titled "Topic Themes by System Level of Intervention."

Although most themes developed specific to a topic, in some cases the same theme emerged in different topics. Themes that related to multiple topics included:

- lack of understanding about access and the service array
- limited short and long-term substitute care setting resources
- services for non-OHP eligible families
- services for transition age youth, and
- the impact of fiscal considerations on service planning.

The CSAC Issue Brief recommends that the "lessons learned" from this data be used to implement "mid course corrections." Each level of the system must work collectively and in collaboration to implement planned system improvements, however levels impact the system differently. For example, burdensome paperwork ranked high as a concern. AMH is leading efforts to streamline and integrate the administrative rules to create efficiencies. That

effort will continue with stakeholder input. How changes in administrative rules are interpreted and implemented occurs at the local level. The CSAC Issue Brief recommends that a subcommittee be formed to continue the process of identifying areas that require attention, better understand how system levels interact, and make recommendations about possible action steps.

In addition to concerns, focus group participants identified many strengths associated with the CSCI. Those strengths are not listed here but can be found in the data recorded for each group that has been distributed to group participants. AMH acknowledges and is grateful for the contribution of time and effort by group participants in the collection of this data.